



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
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Wisconsin special education law serves parents and students

Stakeholder group was instrumental in preserving a positive environment for schools and parents

MADISON—Gov. Jim Doyle today signed Senate Bill 529, which aligns Wisconsin special education law with changes in federal law through reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004).

“I want to thank the Wisconsin citizens who came together through our stakeholder group. They showed deep commitment in their efforts to improve and align Wisconsin’s special education laws with federal IDEA 2004. The group worked to develop a consensus bill and to preserve the positive environment for schools and parents we have worked so hard to establish and support in Wisconsin.

“Among other changes, Wisconsin’s special education bill does three important things that set it apart from federal law.

- 1) Post-high school planning begins at age 14, rather than age 16 as required in federal law, because stakeholders agreed on the importance of transitioning students at an earlier age.
- 2) A number of parental rights that are not required in the new IDEA were maintained, ensuring that parents have the information they need to be effective participants in their children’s educational planning.
- 3) Wisconsin maintains a seamless process in the identification, educational planning, and placement of children, because stakeholders believed that such a process ensures that children receive timely and effective services.

“Wisconsin has long been a leader in service to students with disabilities, passing the first comprehensive special education law in the nation in 1973. This new legislation continues a process begun in 1998 of streamlining our state special education requirements and improving education for our students with special educational needs.”

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